

# Becoming a Papermaker: Best Practices from Japan to the U.S.

By Aimee Lee

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Japanese Papermaking Today .....	1
I. Starting early: Planting awareness in children	
Study No. 1: Ayako Yoshizumi .....	3
II. Laypeople discover papermaking	
Study No. 2: Chie Honma .....	5
III. Family model: old-school succession	
Study No. 3: Yu and Yoko Nishida .....	8
Study No. 4: Hiroaki Imai .....	9
Study No. 5: Yasuo Kobayashi .....	12
IV. Japanese papermaking adopts foreigners	
Study No. 6: Paul Denhoed .....	15
Study No. 7: Richard Flavin .....	16
Study No. 8: Izhar Neumann .....	18
V. Recommendations for Americans	
Early and ongoing education .....	20
Art and craft schools .....	21
Government sponsorship .....	21
Family business models .....	22
Apprenticeships for this century .....	23
Conclusion .....	24
Bibliography and Resources .....	25
Acknowledgements .....	27

## Appendix 1: *Shiroishi Papermaking Song from Japan*

By Margaret Prentice, with Sumio Suzuki

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## Becoming a Papermaker: Best Practices from Japan to the U.S.

Words and photos by Aimee Lee

### Introduction

Papermaking, with a history of over two thousand years, is one of the most impressive technologies of human history. Similar to digital technology today, the invention of paper caused massive shifts in the way that people thought, worked, communicated, and saw the world. However, the mechanization and industrialization of paper has squeezed out most hand papermaking practitioners. Like so many traditional crafts and art practices, papermaking traditions around the world have become extinct or are highly endangered. Because of my work in documenting and spreading awareness of Korean papermaking, I am sensitive to the overall state of paper arts, and am committed to papermaking education in the United States.

Often we must leave home for discoveries that will help us improve conditions at home. In that spirit, I went to Japan for eight days in November 2014 to investigate how people become papermakers. Some methods were systemic while others happened more organically, but they all required a great deal of hard work and dedication to the craft. I hope that looking at best practices in Japan, whose hand papermaking tradition remains one of the strongest in the world, will offer support to American papermakers and artisans with their own succession models.

I came to this research as a specialist in Korean papermaking. Though I understand the techniques and tools of the Japanese craft, I cannot profess Japanese language skills or deep familiarity with the culture. The state of the craft in Japan, though shaky, is less dire than in Korea, so my visit to Japan painted a more hopeful picture than I am accustomed to in my regular research. That said, I also believe that traditional handcrafts are in peril—not only in Asia, but around the world. Because I am also a papermaker, I included some technical information as it may be useful to American practitioners, as well as Japanese terms that are italicized at first appearance. Japanese names are rendered in the western tradition with surname last; all mistakes are my own.

### Japanese Papermaking Today

American interest in Japanese paper began in earnest in the 1970s through the pioneering work of Richard Flavin, Sukey Hughes, and Timothy Barrett (following the footsteps of American paper historian Dard Hunter, 1883-1966). At the time, many Japanese studios approached their work of papermaking as an industrial craft. Making *washi* (Japanese paper) was simply another way to earn a living. Master/apprentice (*sensei/deshi*) relationships were rare, especially cases of a non-familial apprentice to a master papermaker.<sup>1</sup> Some regions had large clusters of studios, but many of these areas have been reduced to one or just a few operations. Famous areas for papermaking that exist today include Echizen, Kochi, and Mino. These are supported by government funding, a strong sense of local responsibility to the tradition, and collective pooling of resources and labor. There exists more general support for papermaking, more variation in

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<sup>1</sup> Email correspondence with Timothy Barrett, 9/15/14. Mr. Barrett offers a beautiful exception in his article about Tadahiko Katsu (1947-1987), apprentice to Eishiro Abe (1902-1984).

studio size and scale, and a wider range of apprenticeship or training models. They usually also have more resources to accommodate visitors.<sup>2</sup>

Through correspondence with Mina Takahashi, an expert in Japanese papermaking who spent two years apprenticing in Japan, she revised my observations about current training systems:

Papermaking was traditionally passed down through families, with the children (or grandchildren) apprenticing until they were ready to take over. Folklore tells us that family production secrets were held from daughters who could carry them away with them in marriage. With changes in the culture, many of these familial ties were broken when children decided, or were encouraged by their parents, not to enter the field, and either the mill or workshop closed once the master could no longer work. In rare instances, the proprietor took in distant relatives or interested people to apprentice and take over the operations. In several major washi-production regions such as Kochi and Echizen, there are training and certificate programs to encourage the continuation of papermaking in historically important areas.<sup>3</sup>

Almost everyone I contacted for preliminary research confirmed that there was no official apprentice system; any that may have existed have mostly disappeared. One paper vendor who made annual visits to Japanese studios noted that the 2008 global economic collapse gave grandchildren more impetus to return to the countryside to learn from their grandparents.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes, papermakers retire while the workshop continues business, but not for long. Paul Arnold (1918-2012) was a woodblock printer and art professor at Oberlin College who used to order Japanese paper from a specific workshop because it was ideal for his prints. However, upon receiving a vastly inferior paper shipment, he discovered that the original papermaker had retired and his replacement was not able to produce similarly fine paper. Mr. Arnold's AFS host daughter from Japan added, "This studio had no succession plan in place when the old master had to quit probably due to his old age. They quickly hired a few young men but their training took many very painful years before they were able to produce the papers that were even barely up to Paul's standard. Sadly, I reckon this is yet another situation, as you have already observed, where the sensei-deshi relationship had been lost."<sup>5</sup>

Though I was unable to visit Echizen, I corresponded with Rina Aoki for more information about this well-known center of papermaking. In her late 30s, Ms. Aoki is an artist, papermaker, and promoter of Echizen's washi culture. Its most famous resident is Living National Treasure Iwano Ichibei, and the village includes about 60 paper-related studios, the largest employing 30 workers. Studios are family run and hire their sons after they finish working in big cities, though they sometimes hire outside the family. Ms. Aoki herself was hired in 2000 to make paper despite the fact that she was not part of the family. Though younger Japanese would like to enter the papermaking field, business is not strong enough for the studios to create new jobs; they can only fill positions vacated by workers who retire or resign. Papermakers work throughout the

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<sup>2</sup> Email correspondence with Tatiana Ginsberg, 9/13/14 and from Paul Denhoed via Lisa Cirando, 9/17/14

<sup>3</sup> Email correspondence with Mina Takahashi, 4/3/15

<sup>4</sup> Conversation in Seoul, Korea with Hiromi Katayama, 4/10/09

<sup>5</sup> Email correspondence with Tsugiko Scullion, 10/20/14

year every weekday to make production line paper, which makes it impossible for each workshop to have an apprentice system: people are too busy working. On a given morning, Ms. Aoki makes over 150 sheets of paper from 8am to 12pm; she teaches English in the evenings. Each workshop has its own method of training. Ms. Aoki dried paper during her first month before beginning to make basic production paper. In contrast, her friend washed cloth daily for three years, and now makes large paper with another artisan. Both women have been making paper for over 15 years.

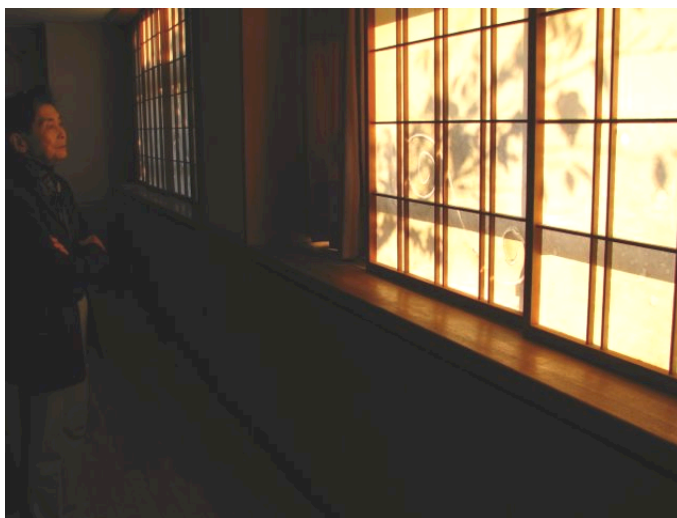
Aside from healthy papermaking workshops, a robust paper industry that sustains public awareness and interest in paper use and traditions is key to the craft's survival. This includes paper retailers, wholesalers, decorators, users, designers, curators, and librarians. Japan's network of paper-related centers includes popular stationery and art paper shops, museums, and stores devoted solely to handmade paper. There are also various locations where tourists can make paper and watch professionals demonstrate. For any craft and culture, there is no easy way to attract, train, and retain skilled workers. What follows are eight more papermaking stories, and ideas for how Americans can learn from their Japanese counterparts.

## **I. Starting early: Planting awareness in children**

### **Study No. 1: Ayako Yoshizumi**

Yamazaki Elementary School is a leisurely 10-minute walk from the train station in Setagaya, a district of Tokyo. My guide and interpreter was Yuriko Suzuki, who made paper for many years and recommended that I meet Ayako Yoshizumi. Mrs. Yoshizumi's business card reads "folkcraft instructor," which is a humble way of explaining what she has been doing for over 25 years. She had recently turned 80 when we met, though I could not tell from her black hair, trim jacket, and sprightly energy throughout our lengthy interview.

It was quiet because we walked through the school gates after closing, and Mrs. Yoshizumi led us to the cafeteria. Its sliding windows were covered with watermarked paper made by her students. After setting out customary tea and treats, we exchanged gifts. The first gift was the core of a paper mulberry tree (*kozo*) with a braid of kozo bark, pine needles, and a zigzag paper streamer tied to the core. The second was two pieces of handmade paper that had been covered with foil and pounded around carvings of flowers to create an embossed design. These were coated with varnish to create a gold color, mimicking gilded wallpaper that used to be produced in Japan for export to Europe, now a nearly extinct practice. Mrs. Yoshizumi teaches this technique to community classes for senior citizens, apart from her regular classroom and afterschool club teaching for children.



In 1988, Mrs. Yoshizumi began to teach papermaking at Yamazaki Elementary School where her students range in age from seven to thirteen. Though she retired in March 2014, she teaches community classes four times a month and regular students three times a month to help train two new papermaking teachers. When she heard about an opening to teach papermaking 26 years ago, she started to learn to make washi to qualify for the job. She said, "You learn when you begin to teach," and has dedicated herself to both. She studied papermaking at a community school funded by Setagaya but open to all students in Japan. Classes consisted of three-day/two-night intensives that met 10 times a year. The first year covered beginner curriculum, the second year covered advanced topics, and for the third year and beyond, alumni created their own program together. A washi classroom and accommodations were included, but the school closed after 20 years. Mrs. Yoshizumi was in the first year of graduates and Ms. Suzuki was in the 13th class, which is how they met.

Fascinated by how papermakers could make something from nothing, Mrs. Yoshizumi was hooked once she saw the steps of making washi on her first trip to a paper mill. She began to visit other studios, though visitors were not allowed to make paper because the masters were absorbed in their own work. They told her that she was strange to watch with so much curiosity and ask so many questions. She visited Yasuo Kobayashi (see Study No. 5) twice and was given drying brushes and boards made from 150-year-old ginkgo wood after visiting national treasure Iwano Ichibei. Her own teacher in Nara Prefecture, Hiroyuki Fukunishi, passed away in 2014.

Paper is fully integrated into the school curriculum because Mrs. Yoshizumi teaches how it is used in daily life. She incorporates paper into sociology, science, art, language, and home economics; in some classes students sew paper to make cushions and curtains, and in other courses they practice calligraphy. This mirrors her own childhood in snow country, where she learned to make rope from rice straw to weave snowshoes. The more she taught, the more she found that paper could become anything, and teaches related crafts like making paper cloth. Papermaking also became a club activity for the PTA, and some mothers eventually became teachers. She wanted to choose a successor from the school's alumni, but it was difficult because they tended to scatter. It was hard to find replacements: "You must have a calling inside of you because it's not easy at all. From the outside it seems easy, but from the inside, it is very tough."



Our conversation continued through dusk and then darkness before we finally went downstairs to see the washi classroom. I marveled at this facility for elementary school students, which was better equipped than many graduate school paper studios in the U.S. It included steam-powered steel heat dryers, steel-lined wooden vats, a large blender, hundreds of papermaking moulds, strainers, brushes, large buckets, and school seals ironed onto fabric to create watermarks for diploma paper. The floors were constructed of the same slate used

for grinding ink to best tolerate water. Outside the classroom was kozo that had been planted and left to grow as a teaching example. Kozo for classroom use comes Ogawa, a papermaking area west of Tokyo. Paper artwork hung from the ceilings and walls. Visitors from various embassies have come to this classroom, which required enormous funds to build in 1988. When the restrooms were updated on each floor, they were designed with backlit glass panels to display paper artwork by students, visible from the hallways.

There are 64 primary schools in Setagaya, which is one of 23 districts in Tokyo. Because there are too many schools to service, 12 schools are chosen to receive washi training. Only select sixth-grade students can make washi for their graduation diplomas, but all fourth graders learn to make paper from kozo. Each three-hour class consists of 30 students who learn to beat kozo by hand and make postcards from milk cartons. Mrs. Yoshizumi taught a few hundred students every month. In addition, from November to January, 600 sixth graders make diploma paper. A TV program wanted to feature her classroom but she refused, because she knew could not handle the extra demand in a district where students came specifically for the papermaking experience.

Mrs. Yoshizumi fears that if washi making disappears in Japan, the Japanese may have to learn it from people abroad. Time is running out as masters pass away, unable to acclimate themselves in "the Internet world." She said, "You can go so deep and far from the entrance of washi," but knows that paper cannot sell in quantity unless people know how to use it in daily life. In her neighborhood, there was an effort to make the potential uses of washi more public. For a week, each shop displayed colorful sign-like dividers (*noren*) made of washi in their doorways. The washi *noren* withstood heavy rain and dried each day without shrinking. This helped people understand how strong and versatile paper can be. She laughed when I noted that she did not seem retired at all, and confessed that she has much less time than she anticipated.

I was moved by Mrs. Yoshizumi's responsibility to her students. This job is too often overlooked when we worry about craft traditions: cultivating an informed citizenry through early and meaningful experiences with the process and products of handwork. Some will never make paper again, but they carry a kernel of knowledge that helps them appreciate washi more in the future. "It is important not just to teach traditional techniques, but to transmit the traditional mind." She wants her students to balance learning with work, and to have the courage to learn Japanese culture. Meanwhile, they ask her to have courage to teach them this world heritage.

## II. Laypeople discover papermaking

### Study No. 2: Chie Honma

Throughout my own life in papermaking, I have met people who began as novices, studied diligently, and left the field to pursue more stable work, raise a family, or change paths. In fact, this describes the majority of those who begin to make paper. Chie Honma is the anomaly. I visited her with Paul Denhoed, a fellow papermaker (see Study No. 6). She trained extensively in several workshops and is now a full-time papermaker who intends to continue for the rest of her career. She began as an apprentice of Shinichiro Abe, a master papermaker in Shimane Prefecture who specializes in making paper from the *mitsumata* shrub. She settled in Tokyo and we walked to her studio in Sugunami after a series of train transfers to find a charming garden



and beautiful house. On a small wooden sign hanging from a tree was her business name, Chidori Tesuki, and her logo, a plover in flight.

When opening her own studio, Ms. Honma had considered locations that were good for growing mitsumata, her main fiber for paper. But when her grandmother passed away a year prior to our meeting, her parents encouraged her to move in. Her family is supportive of her endeavor, and we saw pictures of her infant son strapped to her back as she made large sheets. The studio is the former guest room, which her father helped transform by tearing out the door, floors, ceiling, and walls, and also built necessary equipment. A former co-



worker gave her a large steel-lined vat. She purchased a small *sugeta* (bamboo screen with matching wood mould)<sup>6</sup> and the large *sugeta* was a gift from Richard Flavin (see Study No. 7). She found a large stainless steel cooking pot at an auction as well as some of her drying boards, formerly used for kimono production. The rest of her drying boards were from Mr. Abe. She grows some plants necessary for papermaking in her garden, but is preparing to cultivate kozo and mitsumata in a large field outside of the city. Though she will work that field with a partner, she makes paper year round by herself.

When she was in her mid-20s, Ms. Honma received a letter from a friend written on washi. She was already interested in traditional culture and craft after studying Japanese painting in college. At her job she worked with machine-made card stock, so she was enthralled by the soft texture of washi. She had no connections in the paper world but was serious about learning more, so she read many books about washi, made paper once in Ogawa, and visited paper shops, where she was most impressed by Mr. Abe's paper. Without an appointment, she went to Shimane, which houses a memorial museum to his late grandfather Eishiro Abe, a national treasure. She was the only visitor and told the staff that she wanted to learn papermaking. Mr. Abe already had a history of hosting apprentices and the staff recommended that she speak directly to him. They called him as the studio was nearby, and he came over to meet her. Though no decision was made then, she felt compelled to study with him, and sent him a letter upon her return home. He wrote back to accept her as an apprentice.

They set Ms. Honma's term at two years, understanding she would go somewhere else after that. Because the business was passed down through the Abe family, there was no option to stay. Two prior apprentices had the same two-year agreement before leaving. She wanted to eventually be independent, so this was an ideal arrangement. She was given a small apartment in a separate building and took some of her meals alone, some with the family. Both she and Mr. Abe received

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<sup>6</sup> Paul Denhoed provides an excellent description on his blog:  
<https://washilife.wordpress.com/2015/04/07/sugeta/>

modest government grants through a program that relocated people to under-populated areas of Shimane. At first, she had no salary, but did not have to pay any fee to learn. She had saved money to study there but was grateful for the funding. After a few months, she received a small salary for the work she did at the mill that fell outside of her study. In Mr. Denhoed's experience with Mr. Abe, apprentices usually help in the morning with tasks like picking bark, and work in the afternoon to make paper for their own study. They keep paper they make from leftover fiber that is given to them to use as practice. Often they would make sheets and dry them before re-pulping to continue practice.

Ms. Honma studied with Mr. Abe for two years and Akira Kubota of Sekishu Washi Kubota for one month, before working at studios in Tsuwano for four months and Yamaguchi for three years. When Ms. Honma worked as staff in Yamaguchi, she studied with another local papermaker in her free time to learn his unique style of papermaking. She had no trouble going from one studio to another and was invited by others without introductions, rare in a culture that requires such formalities. In her experience, most studios were simply happy to have someone willing to learn. "My case is so rare," she said, because most papermakers stay at one workshop, or become independent papermakers in the same area where they trained.

Many people ask her for advice, and she explained that as smooth as her path seemed, it was not easy. It was difficult as an outsider to be part of a family business. Places like Ogawa, Mino, and Tosa, which have papers designated as national treasures, have funding from the government on city, prefectural, and national levels so it can be somewhat easier to study there. But even there, the retention rate is only 15-30%. She met many people who wanted to study like her, as well as people who have managed to open their own studios. One was a car dealer, and another was a computer designer. She thinks that people with diverse non-paper backgrounds bring helpful perspectives to making good paper, such as a colleague who had excellent color sense because of his past design experience.



Though she does not make enough income for herself, Ms. Honma is happy. Aside from her website where she receives online orders, she gets customers from high foot traffic on her street and good word of mouth. Her papers are on consignment in Tachikawa, Tokyo, and Shimane, and attract customers through exhibits at washi sales in stores. In her store, a room across from the studio, she showed us a marvelous white paper kimono that she had made. Her wares were displayed in and on a handsome, rare wood vat no longer used for production, and her son was bundled in a corner for a nap after falling asleep during the interview. He woke just in time for our departure. On our walk back to the train station, Mr. Denhoed shared Mr. Abe's observation of Ms. Honma: "She is very determined and dedicated."



### III. Family model: old-school succession

#### Study No. 3: Yu and Yoko Nishida

Artist Reiko Nireki has a studio in Shikoku near Awagami Factory in Tokushima Prefecture, where she apprenticed as a papermaker. Awagami is based on a family business, though most of their papermakers are employees from outside the family. In 1907, there were about 200 papermakers in this area, but once western paper entered Japan for printing, the demand for handmade paper decreased. Awagami is the sole survivor of this once vibrant industry. Now, washi is considered only for special uses, rather than the ubiquitous presence that it enjoyed in the past. In 2012, Ms. Nireki was an artist-in-residence at an art festival in Shimane Prefecture, and met the man who made paper for her installation. She kindly conducted phone interviews on my behalf with 40-year-old Yu Nishida, the youngest papermaker in the Sekishu Washi cooperative. Only six papermakers remain, and they make handmade paper exclusively with kozo that they grow locally. One specific type, *Sekishu-banshi*, was recognized both in 2009 and 2014 as a UNESCO world heritage.

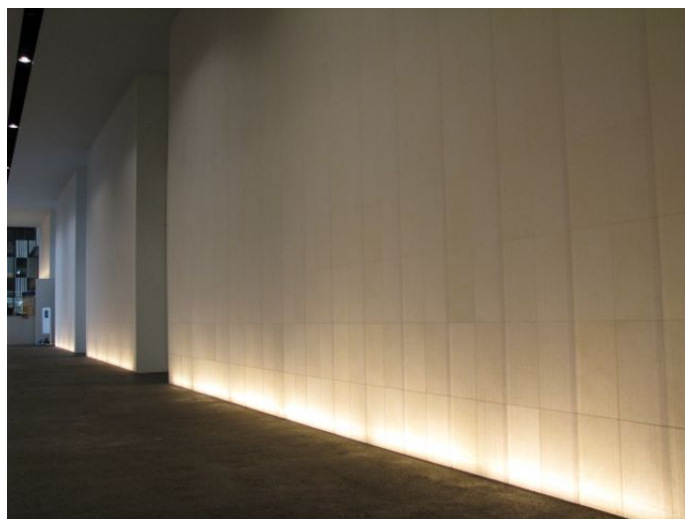
Mr. Nishida was born in Kyoto, where his father had moved to develop his original paper business from Shimane. When he was about 20, Mr. Nishida returned to his father's hometown to learn papermaking from his aunt and has stayed since then. He said that the master-apprentice system does not exist in this small seaside village. Whether out of modesty or honesty, he said that their papermaking techniques are not special, and easy to master. Those who want to achieve this mastery receive local government grants to study privately with papermakers.

Japan faces major depopulation of remote and rural areas, so Shimane participates in a nationwide effort to curb depopulation of rural villages, sometimes called U-turn and I-turn (to encourage people to return to their hometowns from urban areas, or to convince city dwellers to move to the countryside). Mr. Nishida's wife Yoko was originally from Hiroshima and received funding to learn papermaking in the town of Misumi, now subsumed into the city of Hamada. Because the grant was not sufficient for survival, Mrs. Nishida worked a separate part-time job in the evenings. From her second to third year, she received a Misumi town grant to train as a papermaker. She was first accepted into the Sekishu Washi cooperative, then applied for the grant (about 110,000 yen a month—very roughly 1,100 USD), and still had to keep her part-time job. The trainee system was in place for three years and then she married Mr. Nishida, which made it possible for her to stay in the paper business, as there is not much demand for employees. They now have three children and work together at their own paper studio.

Though there is no financial support from UNESCO for upkeep of the world heritage of making Sekishu-banshi, the cooperative can apply for support from Japan's Agency of Cultural Affairs, as it is the country's responsibility to uphold this tradition. This paper was the first washi to be recognized by UNESCO, joined by papers made in Mino and Ogawa/Higashi-Chichibu in this designation with great fanfare in 2014. However, the burden remains almost exclusively on the makers and their supporters to keep traditions alive in a time when the demand for handmade paper is not strong. Once the fanfare subsides, they must continue to make high-quality paper while coming up with new ways to survive.

## Study No. 4: Hiroaki Imai

After several days in Tokyo, I packed my bags to meet my interpreter, Kazuhiro Murayama, at the Ueno station. We took the bullet train to Nagaoka in Niigata Prefecture, and though I estimated that we would have plenty of time to review my interview questions and goals for this visit, the ride was entirely too short. When we exited the train turnstiles, Hiroaki Imai, the owner of Oguni Washi, was waiting with a wide smile.



After speedy introductions, Mr. Imai led us quickly through the new city hall, built two years prior, to a section with illuminated walls. They were pasted carefully from floor to ceiling with identical sheets of handmade paper and lit from behind. With great pride, he told us about this project, which used 100% Oguni Washi paper. Each sheet was coated with *konnyaku*, a starch from the root of the devil's tongue plant, traditionally used to protect paper and render it resistant to water. 10 employees worked half a year to produce 3,500

sheets in the *kikuban* size (65 x 99 cm), which were trimmed into smaller sheets and pasted onto acrylic panels. Even the light panels in the nearby elevators were covered with paper. Installation took a month and required two years of his kozo harvest to produce, using all the fiber left after regular production. This totaled 600 kilos of snow bleached kozo, a unique characteristic of Niigata papers. Oguni Washi holds regular papermaking workshops in the building about seven times a year, sometimes accompanied by one-week exhibitions. The previous summer, an event for papermakers drew over 100 attendees.

Our next visit was Asahi Shuzo, the largest sake brewery in Japan. Their top-shelf brand is called Kubota, "*the brand*," Mr. Murayama explained, that triggered the contemporary sake boom. It has used paper from both Oguni Washi and Kadoide Washi for 30 years for sake labels, the washi labels distinguishing their finest sake from the pack. They produce 3 million bottles a year, whose labels require over 20 tons of kozo. During a tour of the bottling plant, Mr. Imai pointed out a room in the far corner, with walls high enough to block our view. Because Asahi Shuzo is the only company that has mechanized affixing handmade paper labels to glass, the process is secret to the public. Other companies have to attach labels by hand, which slows production. In the retail building, we saw sake bottles decorated with washi, made in workshops that Mr. Imai's wife teaches on site for further promotion.

We left to visit the kozo field, while Mr. Imai talked about the rural local area that had been hit by depopulation after a huge earthquake 10 years ago. He is from nearby Koshiji, and married into a papermaking family from Oguni town, whose 400-year tradition of papermaking had been interrupted. His father-in-law revived papermaking in Oguni, and his mother-in-law and wife had learned papermaking from Mr. Kobayashi, who had directly or indirectly taught most of the local

papermakers. Mr. Imai met his wife in high school and was first an electrician. When he started to consider marriage at age 24, he began to make paper as preparation to run a family business. He started working at Oguni Washi and also took weeklong lessons at Kadoide Washi about five times a year. At the time, Oguni had very few male staff while the orders for sake labels kept increasing, so I imagine that his entry into the business was welcome.



The paved roads gave way to dirt roads that snaked uphill to a wide clearing. Because they had already harvested the trees, none were left standing, but it was clear where the rows were. The oldest part of the field is 30 years old and some plants are 24 years old, still yielding good fiber. Mr. Imai said that the 1.25-hectare field on rented land started with 5,000 plants, but was thinned to 3,000 to create more rows for easier cultivation. The field re-organization began six years ago when Mr. Denhoed worked for Oguni. Their kozo grows four meters tall and requires consistent care. From May to November, they remove small shoots to help the remaining shoots grow large. They use chemical insecticide, but only eradicate weeds with a trimmer, not pesticides. Three independent papermakers come to help during the fall harvest. Two weeks after the harvest, shoots are stripped, and bark is stored dry, providing 800 kilos of fiber annually.

After admiring the healthy kozo bundled on the ground, we drove 20 minutes to the studio, where employees work daily on sake labels, which is 70% of their work. With custom-built wood moulds (*keta*), one worker can form 18 labels at once. Each papermaker dips 200 times a day to make 3,600 sheets. However, the thick labels require laminated (two-ply) paper, so a day's production is actually 1,800 labels. They also make large sheets of paper from which they cut smaller labels. They also produce custom paper for kimono labels and sweets wrappers.

Our final stop was Oguni Washi's store, where Mr. Imai served us tea while discussing staff and intern training. Many people ask to study with him, but most of his staff trained elsewhere before arriving at Oguni. Though he teaches them to make production paper, he feels he is still learning. Some employees have been there for 20 years, and only two or three people left because they were not a good fit. Of his ten staff, three are men and seven are women. Three are in their 20s, one is 30-something, two are in their 40s, and four are in their 60s. 70% of his staff comes from Oguni. One is from Kyoto, where she graduated from a school for papermaking and was introduced to him by a Kyoto papermaker, a common way for studios to hire workers. He has noticed that local schools are interested in classroom papermaking and would like to recruit from a Nagaoka art school where his wife teaches.

Mr. Imai is not worried right now about having enough papermakers in the field. He is more concerned by the lack of people who can make tools and grow kozo. In a self-selecting field, he can tell who will be serious. His own training started with learning all the processes before he

learned specific jobs like making sake labels, which is difficult because they must be perfect. If new staff members learn to make good labels, they stay; if not, they leave. After three years, he can tell if they will succeed.

For two years, Oguni Washi had a state-sponsored internship program that was open to anyone in Japan. It began after the earthquake as part of a national policy to bring jobs back to rural areas. It was an excellent entrance for those interested in papermaking, but it was too easy for less serious people to have a unique experience and then leave once funding ended. Though the interns were funded, Mr. Imai was not. No one from the program stayed, and it was hard to put a lot of energy or time into a program that had no guarantee of success. He believed that if people serious about papermaking participated, it would be a more viable program.



When I asked Mr. Imai if he was worried about the business, he said, "I'm not *not* worried." He would like to market to both Japanese and overseas audiences, and was grateful to Mr. Denhoed for his help, as he knew both Japanese and English, was an excellent writer and designer, and had extensive papermaking experience. Half of the Oguni staff sees their jobs as work, while the other half feels they are carrying on a tradition. Older workers are more businesslike, while younger workers are more concerned about the quality of the paper. Mr. Imai wants to expand beyond sake labels and enhance their products in order to survive. He is not entirely satisfied with where the business is, and of course has weathered hard times. However, he was very happy working with Mr. Denhoed, the first person that he taught seriously. They considered everything together and learned a great deal from each other. This changed him, and since Mr. Denhoed's tenure, the kozo field has never had a bad year. Mr. Imai's daughters will likely inherit the business, and his middle daughter was particularly affected by Mr. Denhoed's stay—she wants to learn English. This will help her sell Oguni Washi's paper abroad in the future. For now, they sell out of their store and through Moriki Paper, a company that exports washi internationally.

I was touched by Mr. Imai's sentiments about this cross-cultural friendship and bonding over tradition and labor. During this particularly busy time of year, Mr. Imai gave his time and invaluable expertise with great generosity. I found it telling that in all of my photos of him, it is almost impossible to find any of him standing still. There is so much work for him to do; I hope that he continues to meet worthy students.

## Study No. 5: Yasuo Kobayashi

After my visit with Mr. Imai, we drove 20 minutes to Kadoide to meet Yasuo Kobayashi, a fifth-generation papermaker and mentor to many more. This was my final site visit, though from my first day, I had heard stories about Mr. Kobayashi and his unique perspective. Unlike many other papermakers, he was a writer and philosopher who had once lived in Tokyo but returned to his roots to help revive papermaking. He and his friends refurbished an old thatched-roof building to create an inn where travelers and apprentices could stay, as well as a second building where meals were served. I met him there alongside a group of 12 Israeli visitors led by papermaker Izhar Neumann, also trained by Mr. Kobayashi, who had agreed to interpret.



To ensure we had enough time to talk, Mr. Kobayashi suggested we speak after dinner because he had to travel the next day. We moved to the old inn at night and he began to pour tea near the sunken hearth (*irori*) in the common room. I had brought the Summer 2007 issue of *Hand Papermaking*, devoted to Japanese papermaking, and asked him to sign his published interview accompanied by a photo of him next to the very same *irori* eight years prior. I felt honored to sit with him and Mr. Neumann for an interview completely different from all the rest.

I first asked Mr. Kobayashi if he was worried about the future of washi. He said, "No one really knows what washi is. They look at machine-made, imported, imitation paper and have no idea what the difference is. *That* is my first concern." He dove into problematic semantics that I have encountered in both Korean and Japanese paper. In a nutshell, he felt that paper language is misleading; the term "washi" is meaningless because it means something different to everyone.

The original word for paper was *kigami*, meaning natural paper (the root of *ki* is *ikiru*, which means "live, raw, fresh," while *kami* means "paper"). He grew up with *kigami*, which was 100% kozo paper with no dye, size, or additives. People who made sliding doors and used plain paper, or who are over 80 years old, use "kigami." However, to differentiate Japanese from western products during the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), the term washi was invented (*wa*=Japanese, *shi*=paper), versus *yoshi* (Western paper). When machines began to make paper, *teski washi* (handmade paper) emerged. To split more hairs, *dento teski washi* (traditional handmade Japanese paper) was coined. His fifth-grade textbook said that paper was washi, which confused his classmates and him, and they asked, "Is *kigami* washi?" Washi is a relatively new term, created 130 years ago but only in common use for about 60 years because it was adopted slowly.

Mr. Kobayashi feels a responsibility for *kigami*'s survival and understanding. In his 20s, he made paper with his own agenda, paper for his own pleasure and satisfaction, full of his ego. In his 30s, he made paper that he thought his customers would like. In his 40s, people wanted white



paper, which requires chemicals. But he did not want to use chemicals because it hurt the kozo. Instead, "I wanted the kozo to tell me what kind of paper it wants to become, not to force it to be what I want. This is not typical for papermakers. I want kozo to be my teacher." He said that some papermakers make paper professionally, while others *grow* or cultivate paper. His grandfather and great-grandfather grew kozo, made and repaired tools and equipment, pulled paper, and knew every step in the process. He follows their example as a paper grower, making a 50/50 mix of nature and himself, guided by wind, soil, and other natural factors. He sees making paper like raising a child: parents should not force themselves onto their child. To explain, he discussed *tengujo*, the thinnest paper made by hand: "In order to get such a thin sheet, you must add a lot of *tororo* [plant that yields mucilage] and create vigorous waves in the vat. But that is not nice to the kozo. When you make paper slowly, it is much nicer for the kozo, because it wants a relaxed motion from a relaxed mind. But if the customer wants thin paper, business dictates that you make what people want to buy." Now in his 60s, he is less interested in what the customer wants and more interested in what the kozo wants.

To elaborate, Mr. Kobayashi compared *bunka* (culture) and *bunmei* (civilization). "Bunka is what you think from your heart." In contrast, *bunmei*'s goal is to develop constantly, exemplified by the western desire for progress: people do not want today and tomorrow to be the same—they want things to be less difficult and more convenient. This mindset cannot translate to making real paper. His grandfather's and father's lives were not very different. His father's and his lives were a little different. But his son's and his lives are so different that it is hard to relate across that rift. He sees two roots for the future of paper: growers and makers. Real kozo goes with the heart but is inconvenient and does not follow progress. *Kigami* comes from the root "to be born," and this word also relates to breathing. When born, paper is like a child: weak, but growing stronger over time until it dies. He knows that his point of view is rare, but also said people must balance *bunka* and *bunmei*, rather than to go absolutely one way or another. Today, the balance is too heavy on the professional side, so he tries to balance this by leaning towards the growing side.



Once we began to talk about training papermakers, Mr. Kobayashi explained another pair of words. Related to nature, *hitsuzen* means "inevitability, necessity," and its opposite is *guzen*, which means "accidental, by chance or coincidence." Mr. Kobayashi said that *sensei* and *deshi* meet by fate, not chance. "People often think that we meet by chance, but it was not by chance that I met Izhar, or that the three of us are sitting here tonight." For professional papermakers with a *bunmei* point of view, it is very important to choose the right people. From the *bunka*

point of view, it is hard to choose because there is no way to choose: the concern is not about finding the right people, but listening to the kozo. If he believes in *hitsuzen*, it is not his job to choose people.



When people ask Mr. Kobayashi to teach them, he never says no. He does not reject people, and would only turn them away now because he doesn't need the help, not because he does not want to teach them. The late Mr. Suzuki in Kyoto, who sold paper, called him to say that someone wanted a teacher. Even though he did not know this person, Mr. Kobayashi took him as an apprentice. He looked at me and said that I reminded him of Mina Takahashi when she first trained with him over 20 years ago. She was in Kadoide when his wife went into labor, and now his son is grown. When I asked him about Mr. Neumann and Timothy Barrett, those who have taken kigami overseas, he said, "If it's about the heart (*kokoro*) and not about technique, it doesn't matter where it is." The essence of kigami is more vital than its techniques and if more people make traditional paper from the heart, this will bring a blessing to the paper. If people use their hearts and other senses, then they can feel the difference between real and imitation products, and recognize the hard work required by these traditions.

In Mr. Kobayashi's opinion, the future of papermakers can only improve through appreciation from society. The number of professional papermakers will not raise the level of paper, and if no customers exist to appreciate the paper, the level of the paper doesn't matter. It is easy for imitation washi to survive, and he thinks that most traditional craftspeople will disappear while more artistic papermakers survive. Real washi is made by hand from bast fibers with the main characteristics of long life (1,000 years), strength, and beauty. But because people seek the least expensive product as they distance themselves from nature, the industry is failing. Not too long ago, people checked the clouds, sun, and wind, and could tell the weather. Now they rely on the forecast because they are not connected to nature. Once disconnected, they have no need for real things or real paper. If these trends continue, then kigami appreciation and culture will vanish.

In the Japanese custom, the family business passes to the eldest son when the father turns 60. Mr. Kobayashi will give up being a maker, but continue as a grower. He is concerned about a deeper kind of paper that requires all five senses to make. These days when people feel hot, they turn on air conditioning and no longer feel the seasons. He hopes to teach his 28-year-old son and friends how to use their senses to return them to a more natural kind of living, which will in turn help them continue the future of real paper.



The next morning, I walked to the studio and watched Mr. Kobayashi harvest the last bit of kozo that he left standing for me to observe. With two studios and 15 workers, he is a major employer in Kadoide. Though he was away for most of the day, he returned at night for my lecture for his employees and friends, and Mr. Neumann's group. I showed the Korean way of cording paper strips while Mr. Kobayashi showed us his method. I was particularly struck by one of his friends whose father had been a master basket maker. He had never appreciated his father's craft until after he passed away, and regretted losing the chance to learn from him. I watched him inspect my cords, silently manipulating the paper in his hands. These are the broken links that I see everywhere I travel in relation to hand crafts, especially those that require years of training and offer little monetary rewards.

After I purchased paper on my final day, Mr. Kobayashi gave me extra sheets dyed with local plants and showed me a room whose walls were papered, full of more paper treasures. He pulled out a special *su* (papermaking screen) that his late father had made from *kaya* (miscanthus reed), also used to thatch roofs. Rather than calling a cab, he insisted on driving me to the train station, and pointed out *kaya* that grew along the roadsides. He bought my train ticket and a box of cakes for the series of trains I would ride to the airport, and then bid me farewell. He demonstrated clearly his philosophy that our meeting was no coincidence, and I am sure that many of his past trainees share the views of Ms. Takahashi, who wrote, "He has been a lifelong inspiration for me. I hold his spirit and generosity in my heart all the time."<sup>7</sup>

#### IV. Japanese papermaking adopts foreigners

##### Study No. 6: Paul Denhoed

Anyone who researches Japanese papermaking will repeatedly come across Paul Denhoed's name. A Canadian who has lived in Japan since 2001, Mr. Denhoed has authored and translated numerous articles, edited publications for the field, teaches regularly, and generously helps people source Japanese papermaking fiber, equipment, knowledge, and paths to expert advice. I



had the good fortune to work with him when he edited an article of mine in 2010, and two years later met him and his wife, Maki Yamashita, in New York City. Early in his career he lived there for three years and volunteered for a year and a half at Dieu Donné, an important paper studio in Manhattan. Originally from Toronto, he received his certificate in book arts and his Master of Fine Arts in graphic design from the University of Iowa. He had learned about the Iowa program in Kyoto during a conference of the International Association of Hand Papermakers and Paper Artists (IAPMA)

in 1995, where he met Mr. Barrett, Ms. Takahashi, and the late Marilyn Sward, all major American leaders in papermaking. Mr. Denhoed stayed in Japan after the conference to visit paper-related sites for a few weeks before returning to North America. After he was accepted into the Iowa program, he took as many Japanese language classes as possible before graduation, and then returned to Japan in 2001 on a Monbukagakusho scholarship. He had no idea when he arrived that he would still be there almost 15 years later.

In 1995, he received an introduction from Mr. Barrett to meet Mr. Abe, the master papermaker who would later train Ms. Honma. After that initial three-week visit, Mr. Denhoed cultivated this relationship over many years. He did not even bring up the idea of studying with Mr. Abe until several years after his first visit, because he knew how important it was to show dedication. In

<sup>7</sup> Email correspondence with Mina Takahashi, 11/27/14

2004, he studied for three weeks with Mr. Abe, and continued to travel to Shimane once every year or two for studio visits or longer stretches of study. During this time, he stayed with Mr. Flavin for just over a year. He also met Mr. Imai at a young papermaker's gathering, whose association had been created to encourage young people to enter the field and to provide support. They began a conversation about working at Oguni Washi.

By the time Mr. Denhoed was ready to work for Oguni Washi, the studio had already filled their full-time position, but welcomed him to work part-time before coming on as full-time staff. The first two years consisted of traveling back and forth from Tokyo to work for three to six days at a time. While living in Niigata, he witnessed the goodwill between Mr. Imai's and Mr. Kobayashi's paper mills. Mr. Imai treated Mr. Denhoed like family, and they remain connected even though he has relocated to Tokyo and is raising his own family. He said that though papermaking is usually a family trade in Japan, allowing people from outside the family to enter is now accepted, not out of choice, but necessity. There are other ways of training to become a papermaker, which include studying at centers like the Testing Station in Kochi or the former Testing Station at Ogawa (where many Americans have learned to make paper, now called the Hands-on Learning Center).

Though Mr. Denhoed owns various pieces of papermaking equipment, he has not been able to set up a home studio, and instead earns his living as a teacher. He remains a major source of information in his continued research on Japanese papermaking, after having lived in Japan for so long, visited so many mills, and experienced a wide range of training opportunities. Though he lost many meticulous research notes in a fire at Mr. Flavin's temple studio, he has lived and breathed Japanese papermaking in a manner that is rare for a contemporary North American. His current blog on washi and life in Japan quietly displays his paper knowledge, writing prowess, and cultural sensitivity. He has traveled nearly every papermaking path, from student to apprentice to employee to teacher, and washi is fortunate to host this remarkably learned advocate in its home country.

### **Study No. 7: Richard Flavin**

Of all the ex-pats devoted to washi in Japan, Richard Flavin is by far the elder statesman. It is worth repeating that many people believe that he makes paper closer to the Japanese tradition than Japanese-born makers. An artist and proprietor of Jionji Press who lives in Tokyo and maintains a studio in Ogose, a western suburb, Mr. Flavin is an American from Boston who has lived in Japan for over 40 years. I met him twice during my trip, at his wife's studio. Ryoko Haraguchi is a talented textile designer who owns the design studio Sind/Gallery Sind in Tokyo, and works extensively with master artisans in India.

Mr. Flavin was drafted during the Vietnam War and therefore very happy to be sent to Korea to serve in Incheon (1968-1970). In Korea, he met an etcher who introduced him to a Japanese printmaker, and was so inspired by this visit that he returned to Boston to save money to get back to Japan. Like Mr. Denhoed, he never expected to stay this long. In college, he studied graphic design and printmaking, and in Japan learned how important paper was to woodblock printing. In the 1970s, Ogawa's Testing Station had an excellent system with many teachers, where he met

Timothy Barrett, who happened to be training at the same time. This was a way for students outside of papermaking families, and even outside of Japanese culture, to learn the craft.

Eventually, Mr. Flavin gathered enough equipment to set up his own studio and kozo field. He found a dream location at a Zen temple in Ogawa where he was the temple keeper in exchange for rent. He was very active in the farming community, which included the care and harvest of kozo plants. The building was very accessible and he worked there until a tragic fire in 2005 that destroyed everything. This was the biggest shock of his life, and he used his entire savings to help rebuild it. The community is happy with the new temple and he remains part of it, having always given a yearly donation since his days as a caretaker. In the meantime, he and Ms. Haraguchi had already bought land in nearby Ogose, so they built a new studio there. It is more remote, 20 minutes from the station after a 1.5-hour train ride from Tokyo. Only one neighbor stays year round, and only half of the 12 houses are occupied. The homes are not winterized but his studio is insulated, though his only source of heat is from kerosene space heaters. Ogose is a depressed area that can only produce plum and other fruit trees because of its poor soil in the rocky mountains. The benefit to working there is clean river water that runs through his property with high calcium content, excellent for papermaking.

When Mr. Flavin had the temple space, it was large enough to accommodate visitors and short-term students who came and went as they trained with him, as well as long-term 'apprentices' like Mr. Denhoed. Mr. Flavin never searched for people to train; they simply came and he took in those whose natures fit. When Mr. Denhoed asked to study with him, Mr. Flavin accepted because they had already met and he knew that they would get along.



Now in his early 70s, Mr. Flavin no longer teaches papermaking because the physical labor is too demanding. He still teaches paper casting and other craft workshops, which require significantly less time and energy to prepare. He thinks that washi can only survive if young people participate in making it. "If you asked me ten years ago, I would have said that washi would not survive. But now, the attitude of young people has changed," having seen more of them give up city life to move to the country. Though country life requires a lot of hard work, it is less costly. He noted that young papermakers are more independent and freer than their elders, who often only made paper to fulfill orders and had a limited, conservative output.

Mr. Flavin spends weekdays in Ogose at his studio and long weekends in Tokyo to help his wife at work. They both use *kakishibu* (persimmon dye) and carved woodblocks in their respective work on paper and textiles, and the same block created dyed designs on silk and debossed patterns on paper. He loves antiquing, and has found worm-eaten account books made of washi



that he recycles into new paper, cross-shaped woodblocks carved on both sides to print kite designs, and 66cm-square sheets of paper made during World War II for balloon bombs.



Mr. Flavin has an expansive view of papermaking and his travels informed our conversations about Chinese, Nepalese, and Philippine papermaking. He acknowledged Mr. Kobayashi's prescient insight to approach a brewery to make sake labels, which has now become a trend. Mr. Flavin also made labels for a local brewer over 10 years ago in collaboration with a local farmer, to make a product made entirely in Ogawa. He feels this is a consistent and regular market for washi, which appeals to customers looking for good quality products. In the past, he made large

paper with Mr. Denhoed to cover *fusuma* (sliding panels that act as doors or walls) for a traditional Japanese restaurant in Kyushu. These are only a couple of his many collaborative projects that highlight the versatility and beauty of handmade paper.

Without signs of boredom, Mr. Flavin fielded my barrage of technical questions with practical and poetic answers. He talked about work songs in Ogawa often sung while people beat fiber, one whose lyrics are sung by women who do not want to marry papermakers.<sup>8</sup> Unlike most of the papermakers that I met, he considered himself an artist first. To make his art, he dedicated himself to papermaking, which is the first step before he works with natural dyes, acrylic colors, and rubbings over wood and metal shapes. Not many artists commit this deeply to materials and process, and his work has inspired American endeavors in root-to-sheet papermaking that leads to thoughtful paper artwork. His boundless sharing of time and expertise seemed completely in character with his history of teaching many people over many years.

### Study No. 8: Izhar Neumann

One fortuitous aspect of my trip was crossing paths with Izhar Neumann in Kadoide, an ideal interpreter because he is a papermaker, strongly connected to Japan. In 1983, he made his first trip to Japan from his home in Israel. He trained for half a year in Mino and then spent a year in Kadoide. He was the first papermaking student of his Mino teacher, so he felt fortunate to meet Mr. Kobayashi, who not only had more teaching experience, but whose personality complimented his own. During a washi tour organized by papermaker Asao Shimura, Mr. Neumann served as the tour driver so that he could accompany the group; it was the only way he could afford to participate. After his initial stay in Japan, he knew that he wanted to return on a regular basis, but needed reliable funding. He realized that he could guide groups of people on tailored tours, and has returned every year in this capacity. His tours are different from the usual fare and he never considers himself a professional guide, as this mindset would change his

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<sup>8</sup> For details on one particular paper song from a different region, see "Shiroishi Papermaking Song from Japan" in Appendix 1.

enjoyment of the work. He carefully selects each travel group, meets them together before they depart Israel, and never uses the same itinerary twice. The tours provide a diverse and unusual experience and he constantly discovers new places and people to include. Though Kadoide is a small rural town, his group of 12 was content to spend four days there, taking hikes in the rain, watching performances, making paper, trying calligraphy, and sharing Japanese food and poetry.



Mr. Neumann was serious about continuing Japanese papermaking when he returned to Israel, and went through official channels to ship 10 root cuttings from Mr. Kobayashi's kozo plants. They were carefully disinfected and wrapped in natural sponge, mailed to Israel, and held in quarantine before he could plant them. Seven survived, and grew to 300 plants. He rents the land where they grow and they propagate easily with 4-meter heights each year. He does not do a lot to cultivate them, yet they are thriving. He opened his first studio in Israel with his

ex-wife, called Tut Neyar, which she continues to operate. He now has his own studio named after himself.

We talked about the feasibility and success of the sensei/deshi system, and he shared a story about his own apprentice in Israel. A Czech man, now 35, arrived to do a labor swap, learning Hebrew in exchange for helping around the paper studio. He used to work in the private banking sector and now has wealthy customers from his previous work. A marketing genius, he did a job for a steel company where he made certificates out of paper that contained steel dust. Mr. Neumann provided him with his first kozo cuttings, but they were so small that a neighbor accidentally mowed them down. He planted a second batch and was finally able to harvest them for the first time with great happiness and pride. He left Prague to move to a small village where he is raising his family, by a stream with clean water, and gets linen and hemp sheets from a cigarette manufacturer to process into paper. Like his Japanese counterparts, he is starting a papermaking business after leaving a completely different career.

Mr. Neumann is the same age as Mr. Kobayashi's younger brother and said that his teacher has always felt like an older brother. They lived together like family when he was training, before he met his first wife in Japan. The couple wanted to live together, but Mr. Kobayashi's late father disapproved of the arrangement, so Mr. Neumann moved out. After he started his family in Israel, they traveled to Japan with him and stayed in a rented house in Kadoide. He is devoted not only to the washi tradition, but to hands-on research, building tools that only exist in history books. This includes making su with horsehair with hollow miscanthus reeds and solid *juncus* rushes (and even stainless steel) to recreate historical papermaking tools. He uses these tools to make paper and presents his findings on how they affect the final sheet, which is important work that very few people actually do. Most scholars only read and write about papermaking, rather than testing historical theories, and can mistakenly repeat cited, but incorrect, theories. He wants



to correct these misconceptions and enjoys his research as much as papermaking. He is also concerned about preserving diverse traditions in various cultures, and has been disappointed to see efforts in Taiwan and Nepal to make Japanese paper. Rather than a homogenized product, it would benefit each region to preserve its own style to maintain diversity in the paper world.

Mr. Neumann has come full circle as a papermaker with his own studio and students, yet honors his lifelong bond with his teacher, and continues to return to the site of his training. I found this connection to be one of the most unusual and compelling in all of my research to date. Usually, the student moves on and retains correspondence or intermittent contact. But in this case, teacher and student have become friends, colleagues, and family to each other. I admire how this pair has grown into middle age and beyond as they continue the work they began 30 years ago.



## **V. Recommendations for Americans**

Based on my fieldwork in Japan, but informed by years of related observations, research, and teaching in the papermaking and craft fields, I offer ideas for how these Japanese models can be adapted for American use.

### **Early and ongoing education**

Though it takes longer to see results, and these results can be difficult to quantify, early exposure to crafts is important not only to the survival of handwork, but vital to the entire well-being of a child. Integrated hands-on learning brings lessons alive and makes them tangible to students, which can spur a range of results from miniscule to profound. Rather than keep these creative practices separate from other subjects, include them in the center of learning.

The benefits of learning different crafts extend throughout life and also include improved health, inherent in any process connecting the hand and brain, people to nature, and people to each other. Intergenerational learning is also valuable in academic and non-academic settings. American craft schools do a remarkable job of bringing together master teachers and eager students from all walks of life. How can this respect for skilled labor be instilled on a larger scale, not just in these craft oases? Matthew Crawford makes compelling arguments for a paradigm shift in the way society considers work that is essential to human survival in *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work*. At the same time, there will always be a divide between people who feel that handwork is a valuable cultural extension of tradition, and those who see it as a job that they attend to every day. Regardless, it is important to keep the dialogue open and vibrant, and idle hands busy.

## Art and craft schools

Contemporary craft has enjoyed more acceptance and recognition in America, especially in prominent craft schools outside of academia. These schools provide excellent models for short- to long-term learning in a broad array of media and techniques. They include workshops, opportunities for artisans to live for years at a time in a setting conducive to work, scholarships, work-study opportunities, and assistantships. Academia was quicker to discard craft education, but despite its focus on "new" media, it seems to be reconsidering the merits of older technology. Students have been vocal about their interest in working with their hands, to get a break from staring at screens. This generation of students who grew up with less access to shop classes, art classrooms, and even the outside world, instinctively knows they are missing something. Strong connections to environmental studies, library, or science programs may provide more promising collaborations than default pairings with art programs. In my experience, hands-on workshops within classes that usually only involve book learning have significant positive impact on students accustomed to passive watching and listening. Full sensory perception is the best way to fully embrace papermaking, and Jacob Eyferth writes eloquently in *Eating Rice from Bamboo Roots* about embedded knowledge in Chinese papermakers that could never be acquired from reading instruction manuals.

Art programs would benefit from re-introducing materials and methods courses, because new students often lack a full grasp of tools, materials, and processes. This helps them understand the cost of their materials and often invisible processes. One endangered practice is tool making: America led a wave of contemporary papermakers, but has few engineers and tool/equipment builders. This field could be developed through partnerships with vocational schools or industrial and product design departments. The handful of U.S. paper equipment and toolmakers, some of whom have academic affiliations, have yet to train guaranteed successors. Teachers looking to place students in serious internships would be wise to include these masters into their networks. Another lack of expertise lies in plant and ecosystem cultivation for papermaking, though more papermakers today include foraging, gardening, and harvesting in their work. Connections with university farms, agriculture departments, and nature centers would be fruitful, especially now that papermaking with invasive plants has become a clear subset in the field.

## Government sponsorship

When it comes down to business, money seems to be a sticking point in training: the master has little time to give because s/he must earn a living, and the apprentice needs funds to cover basic food and shelter needs. In my research in Korea, people always complain that the government must provide funding to help papermakers survive. The system of national treasures in Korea is modeled on Japan's, and both require designees to have apprentices. Though stipends are given to these distinguished masters, they are a token and not a salary. The closest U.S. parallel may be the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship. A lifetime honor, it comes with a one time financial award of \$25,000 and permanent designation.

American artisans face plenty of obstacles to government funding of their traditions, but they have also discovered creative and grassroots solutions. Involvement on the local level is always the first step to gaining access to more funding, and building an ongoing base of support.

Farmers markets and similar fairs draw audiences who may be supportive of these traditions, through demonstrations, family programming, sales, and commissions.

Papermaking studios would benefit from healthy relationships with their local representatives. This takes time, but community investment is common sense. One example is the Morgan Conservatory in Cleveland, which opened its Eastern Paper Studio in 2014,<sup>9</sup> blocks away from the city's AsiaTown. It participates annually in the Cleveland Asian Festival, but could benefit from more sustained connections with its immediate and wider communities. More and more foundation support aims to bolster struggling cities with exactly this kind of programming, and labor in depressed economies is plentiful, though it may take an extensive outreach to find future papermakers. This trend has been growing in the paper world through projects like Combat Paper and Peace Paper, where veterans, survivors, and people suffering from PTSD come together to make paper with materials that hold meaning: underwear, uniforms, shirts worn underneath police gear, and so on. The People's Paper Co-op in Philadelphia brings papermakers and formerly incarcerated residents together to effect social change.

The challenge with government support, as well as foundation and private financing, is that there is no guarantee of sustained funding. But with enough ongoing support and high-quality programming, even small studios have the ability to survive and thrive. Job and skills training may open up another line of funding. Though crafts likely cannot compete with vocational training programs eligible for federal support (last year, \$600 million was allocated for apprenticeship programs), it seems that legislators are aware of gaps in skilled labor training.

Another way to find successors is to search abroad. Even though U.S. traditions have histories that seem short to older cultures, there are invested people beyond our borders. Papermakers are in less demand than physicians, but American programs have already attracted foreign students who aim to stay and continue their work, providing valuable new perspectives.

### **Family business models**

Unlike Japan and other parts of Asia, the American hand papermaking industry does not rely as heavily on family businesses because of cultural differences. However, couples have founded successful paper ventures, which include Carriage House Paper (Elaine and Sidney Koretsky, Donna Koretsky), Twinrocker Paper (Kathryn and Howard Clark), and Old Way Bookarts, Tools, and Workshops (Melody and Jim Croft). Whether their efforts will extend to the next generation remain to be seen, though Carriage House is already a second-generation business and Twinrocker found an able trainee who has become a partner.<sup>10</sup> Those who see the most sustainable progress seem to be open to finding and training excellent employees outside of the family, and accepting help with various aspects of their work.

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<sup>9</sup> Full disclosure: I am the Artist-in-Residence at the Morgan, launched their Eastern Paper Studio, and continue to do programming work for the organization.

<sup>10</sup> "Mark of the Maker" is a short documentary that looks at the benefits of running a paper studio in a small town, and how the Clarks found local talent to train and take over the papermaking work. View online at <https://vimeo.com/15281421>.

## Apprenticeships for this century

Though the bulk of my research is about hand papermaking, the field shares characteristics and challenges with other crafts in America. Apprenticeships have been examined and the consensus is that they must be updated to fit today's needs. The New Apprenticeship Project "supports contemporary creative and skills-based training, updating the traditional form of apprenticeships through research and the publication of resources in order to meet the needs of today's craft community."<sup>11</sup> This project has produced insight into how this model has shifted over the years, its benefits and flaws, and considerations for the future. There is no longer a set method or model for masters and apprentices, but the many of the same issues remain:

1. Where are the networks for this information and who maintains them?
2. Is there financial support for both parties, and who provides it?
3. How do you find inevitable artisans?
4. What are the cases for and against a regular flow of apprentices?
5. How do masters let apprentices fly when it is time to move on?

In these fields, there is no other way to learn than by doing. Some talented artisans are self-taught, but most benefit from instruction and interaction with skilled teachers. Papermaking is now taught through the graduate level of academia, as well as in grade school classrooms, workshops on farms, and in bathtubs. The landscape has grown and shifted rapidly, creating more opportunities for learning, but perhaps less ways to practice deeply. In my case, I learned to make paper in graduate school from teachers and colleagues, interned and worked for a papermaking artist, and apprenticed with several teachers in Korea through funding by the U.S. State Department. I also continued to take workshops and perform independent research before returning to one of my teachers in Korea. This experience devolved into an unfortunate rift, from which I am still learning many lessons. However, it is not an unusual case.

I have seen and experienced the best and worst aspects of intense training, which informed the way I worked with my own apprentices last year at the Morgan Conservatory. One is now in graduate school for photographic preservation and collections management while the other was hired as the Morgan's program manager. Our training relationships were incredible, but the greatest challenges came from working within a specific organizational structure and financial limitations. It was very difficult to see them work diligently for so many months without compensation even though I knew they were learning in a unique setting, impossible to find anywhere else. I myself had paid for most of my training, not only in academia and workshops, but abroad. Grant funding covered living and travel costs and some of the teaching fee demanded by one master. For the most part, however, I have met many teachers who refused pay in both Korea and Japan. I have also worked in exchange for studio space and time, and my apprentices had full studio access and additional training opportunities. It is too early to see how this experience informs their careers but I look forward to finding out.

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<sup>11</sup> Find more information at <http://www.newapprenticeshipproject.org/>.

## Conclusion

There are no easy answers or solutions to the questions and problems that craft traditions face in the U.S. and abroad. Though I knew going into this research that direct transfer of system or philosophy from Japan to America was impossible due to cultural differences, I learned a great deal about how to look at the present situation of hand papermaking. Appreciation for hand papermaking can only develop with an informed picture of how its craft, practices, and products affect culture, history, and daily lives. While the ex-pats and foreigners in Japan provide important cultural bridges, everyone I met connected past tradition to today's possibilities.

When meeting serious papermakers around the world, I sometimes think that nothing has to change in terms of creating and improving networks, codifying teaching relationships, and identifying and widening a pipeline for future craftspeople, because the field is self selecting. Those who are truly called to these traditions will find a way, no matter what. Teachers appear just when the student needs one. The danger with letting fate work itself out is timing: just as we lose biological species every day, we risk losing craft knowledge once fully ripened hands disappear. For that reason, we not only need to share the products and practices of these hands, but their stories. These stories keep traditions, and the inspiration to preserve them, alive.



Top L to R: Izhar Neumann, Basket maker's son, Mr. Kobayashi's son. Below L to R: Aimee Lee, with woven paper teapot, Mr. Kobayashi. Nov. 25, 2014. Photo courtesy of Dorit Magal.

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### Online Material

Aimee Lee's blog during November 2014 field work  
[http://moonaimiee.blogspot.com/2014\\_11\\_01\\_archive.html](http://moonaimiee.blogspot.com/2014_11_01_archive.html)

Aimee Lee's images from Yamazaki Elementary School (Ayako Yoshizumi)  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/moonaimiee/sets/72157647255660393/>

Aimee Lee's images from Chidori Tesuki (Chie Honma)  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/moonaimiee/sets/72157649577166281/>

Chidori Tesuki website  
<http://chidori-tesuki.com/>



Information about Sekishu Washi

<http://www.sekishu.jp/en/history/index.html>

Yu and Yoko Nishida's paper studio website

<http://nishita-seishisho.com/>

Aimee Lee's images from Oguni Washi (Hiroaki Imai)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/moonaimiee/sets/72157649170834977/>

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Interview with Paul Denhoed by Steve Miller

<http://bookarts.ua.edu/paul-denhoed/>

Paul Denhoed's blog about washi

<https://washilife.wordpress.com/>

Aimee Lee's images from Gallery Sind (Richard Flavin, Ryoko Haraguchi)

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Izhar Neumann's process of making paper from kozo trees in Israel

<https://youtu.be/UMRwL5PxG2s>

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<http://www.twinrocker.com/>

<http://cargocollective.com/oldway>

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## Shiroishi Papermaking Song from Japan

MARGARET PRENTICE, WITH  
SUMIO SUZUKI

Album cover of 45-rpm recording of Shiroishiwashi Papermaking Song, released by Victor Recordings in 1976. Pictured is Shiroishiwashi papermaker Tadao Endo, at the vat. Liner notes includes annotated lyrics, and instructions with photos for accompanying dance movements. Courtesy of Sumio Suzuki.

BELOW: Oil painting by author Margaret Prentice of co-author Sumio Suzuki steaming kozo, 2013, 16 x 12 inches. Courtesy of Margaret Prentice.



As if by fate, I met Sumio Suzuki<sup>1</sup> at my house in Eugene, Oregon in 1993 during his first trip to the US. He and a number of other Japanese craftsmen were invited to demonstrate their crafts at the Eugene summer festival, Art and the Vineyard. Sumio demonstrated traditional Japanese hand papermaking using his equipment but borrowed my vat. When he came to my house he was surprised to see my papermaking studio, including the Hollander beater and some paper I had made. During that occasion he invited me to visit him in Japan. Consequently I applied and was awarded a Japan Foundation fellowship to research Japanese hand papermaking and Japanese woodcut printmaking for four months, during my sabbatical from August through mid-December 1994. Sumio planned my two-month papermaking research journey, which included being hosted by paper research institutes in six different prefectures. He traveled with me to translate, answer my questions, make introductions, teach me proper protocol, and reserve trains and hotels. We became very close friends and still are.

Sumio Suzuki lives in Yugashima-machi outside the city of Izu in Shizuoka prefecture on the Izu Peninsula. Sumio is a traditional hand papermaker, making sheets of washi mainly with kozo fiber. He makes washi for a variety of uses and also makes small craft items such as animal masks with kozo pulp. He grows his own kozo and tororo-aoi. He learned his craft during a five-year papermaking pilgrimage across Japan. Sumio is also a graduate of Meiji University, where he studied historical archeology. Because of his keen interest in the history and makers of washi, I knew that he would be able to suggest something wonderful for the Storytelling issue of Hand Papermaking.

The Ōshū Shiroishi Papermaking Song is a work song that was created in Shiroishi city in Miyagi prefecture, where a high-quality handmade paper called Shiroishi washi is produced.<sup>2</sup> Ōshū (also known as Mutsu) is the old provincial name for Japan's northern Honshū prefectures including Fukushima, Miyagi, Iwate, and Aomori.<sup>3</sup>

奥州白石紙すき唄

春は裸で  
夏綿入れて  
秋に肥らせ  
冬に採る、冬に採る

雪の朝だに  
煙があがる  
こうぞ蒸けたか  
湯気が立つ、湯気が立つ

18 ころから紙漉き習うた  
歳もゆかぬに  
紙槽鏡、紙槽鏡

粉雪さらさら紙屋のあかり  
何を漉いてか  
夜もすがら、夜もすがら

ŌSHŪ SHIROISHI KAMISUKI UTA

Haru wa hadaka de  
Natsu wataire de  
Aki ni futorase  
Fuyu ni toru, fuyu ni toru

Yuki no asada ni  
Kemuri ga agaru  
Kōzo fuketa ka  
Yuge ga tatsu, yuge ga tatsu

Ju-hachi goro kara kamisuki narauta  
Toshi mo yukanu ni  
Funakagami, funakagami

Konayuki sarasara kamiya no akari  
Nani o suite ka?  
Yomosugara, yomosugara.

ŌSHŪ SHIROISHI PAPERMAKING SONG

Naked in spring  
Putting on cotton in summer  
Getting fat in fall  
Harvest in winter, harvest in winter

On snowy mornings  
Smoke rises  
Is the kozo ready?  
Steam goes up, steam goes up

Learned papermaking from around the  
age of 18  
Young and fresh  
Papermaking vat as mirror, Papermaking  
vat as mirror

Powder snow steadily falls, there is a light  
in the papermaking studio  
What is being made?  
All night long, all night long

Sumio explained that in the eleventh-century Heian period, a paper called Michinoku-gami was highly appreciated by the Kyoto aristocracy. It is believed that Shiroishi is one of the places where Michinoku-gami was made at that time. Papermaking in Shiroishi declined, but in 1931, Tadao Endo, who was 18 years old at the time, started a papermaking studio with the aim to revive this tradition of papermaking. He died at the age of 57 in 1997. Shortly before he died, he created this work song that portrays the process of papermaking with humor.

The song consists of 26 verses, divided into four parts. The first part is about cultivating raw materials for washi, namely kozo, and the different varieties of kozo. The second part describes the process of harvesting, steaming, and scraping the kozo to arrive at the white inner bark. The third section is about cooking, bleaching, beating, sheet forming, and drying. The fourth part introduces types and uses of products made with washi.

At 26 verses, the song is quite long, so Sumio transcribed four representative verses. Above are the four verses in Japanese, in romanized Japanese, and a line-by-line English translation.

In addition to transcribing the four verses, Sumio provided enlightening commentary on each verse.

**VERSE 1:** In early spring, soil is moved aside from the parent stumps in the kozo field, allowing the new shoots to sprout well. In the summer, soil is hilled up around the kozo stumps to protect the shoots. Throughout the summer the stems grow, so that in the fall, the trunks become thick and the shoots are fully mature. Then the papermaker waits to harvest the stems until after the winter solstice when there is a pause in growth.

**VERSE 2:** Ribbons of smoke rise up into the cold, snowy morning sky from the kozo steamer-cauldron. Soon, white steam bil-

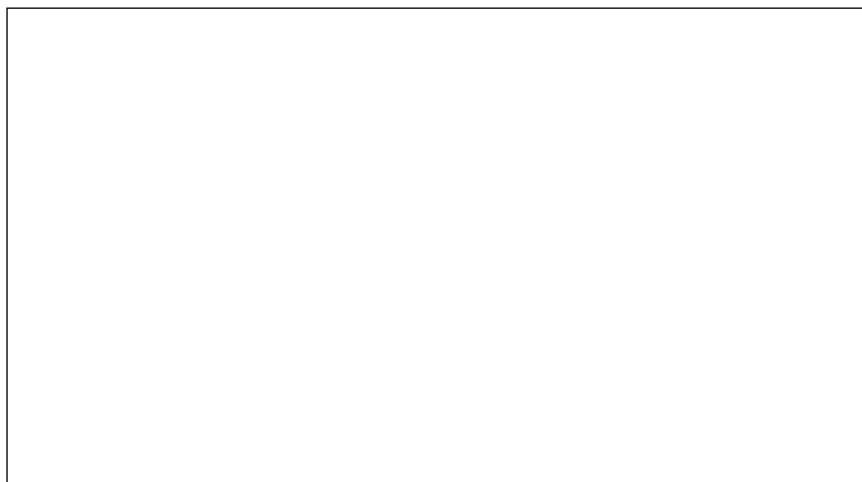
lows up, and the sweet smell of steamed kozo stems fills the air. Now it is ready to strip the bark!

**VERSE 3:** Mainly men make the paper, but it's the women who really do it best. Young women stand in front of the papermaking vat filled with pulp and water, and, with hair tied back, look at their reflection on the creamy, still surface of the vat as if it is a mirror.

**VERSE 4:** In haiku poetry, "papermaking" is a seasonal word that signifies winter. Long ago, *tororo-aoi* could not be stored past winter, so papermaking was best done in the cold winter season by farmers who made paper as an off-season cash crop. Papermaking continues from early in the morning to late at night. The light in the paper workshop can be seen, while flakes of powder snow dance all night long. Someone is making paper.

NOTES

1. Japanese names are given in first name, last name order.
2. Correspondence from Sumio Suzuki to Margaret Prentice, August 28, 2013. Translated by Satoko Motouji, with additional clarifications by Mina Takahashi, with kind assistance of Ami Takahashi and Mineko Kawada.
3. "Mutsu Province," Wikipedia, last modified September 5, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutsu\\_Province](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutsu_Province).



*Paper Sample:*  
*Shiroishiwashi*

TEXT BY SUMIO SUZUKI

Following the dying wish of the late Tadao Endo, his wife (90 years old) is now running the studio. The studio's output is very limited, but well respected.

Shiroishiwashi was used to record the Japanese Instrument of Surrender, signed September 2, 1945, on the deck of the U.S.S. Missouri, in Tokyo Bay, marking the end of World War II. Since the mid-70s, Shiroishiwashi has been used by Nara's famed Todaiji Temple for *omizutori* (an annual Buddhist ceremony). The monks wear paper kimono made of Shiroishiwashi. Paper clothing, *kamiko*, is preferred because it avoids killing silkworms and does not require hiring women for weaving fiber into cloth.